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NEW DEAL SYMPOSIUM

Over fifty years ago the New Deal Congress passed its first package of sweeping reforms. With its chief architect in the White House and a commanding majority of sympathetic legislators in both Houses of Congress, the New Deal seemed destined to quickly and radically alter the role of the federal government in American society. This alteration would, ultimately, transform the way Americans addressed their social and economic problems.

Before all this could happen, however, the New Deal enactments had to face stiff courtroom challenges before conservative judges. Only after several years of legal maneuvering would these executive, legislative, and popular expressions of public policy be realized. The task of midwifing these policies into reality fell to the attorneys who staffed the newly created federal agencies. By leading the battle to redefine American society, these individuals also defined a new role for the attorney as a reformer and public servant.

To this day, the New Deal controls the way we address public policy issues and the proper role of the federal government as a tool to resolve those policy issues. Nevertheless, in recent years, the values and ideals of the New Deal have been seriously challenged. Because the policy issues remain as compelling as ever and because attorneys continue to play such a key role in shaping policy, we thought it would be worthwhile to invite several scholars, some of whom were New Deal architects, to share their views on the strengths and weaknesses of the New Deal, as well as its continued vitality in our public life.

The articles in the New Deal Symposium embrace at least two generations of scholars. The passion with which some of the scholars, especially those who helped to shape the original New Deal programs, write about their subjects testifies eloquently to the power of those reforms to capture human aspirations. Our role in this Symposium was to provide a forum in which knowledgeable, committed individuals could share the fruits of their years of scholarship and experience with our readers. The Washington Law Review neither endorses nor rejects the ideas expressed in these articles.